



Proverbs 23-24

Tape #7229
Proverbs 23-24
By Chuck Smith

Shall we turn now to our Bibles, Proverbs, chapter twenty three, as we continue our study through the word. Proverbs, twenty three.

Now I don't know that there's anything so spiritual about the first bit of instruction that we receive here. Just good, practical, sound advice. Now several times in the twenty third chapter, we're going to be hearing Solomon addressing his remarks to his son. He's talking about making his father happy, about making his mother proud. So these are just sort of fatherly exhortations, or fatherly advice to a son, and a part of the training of the son. A part of the fatherly advice is, is teaching them certain etiquette. So this has to do deal more with etiquette probably than spiritual things. But he is saying...

When you sit to eat with a ruler, consider diligently what is before you: And put a knife to your throat, if you're given to appetite (23:1-2).

"Now when they come around with those fancy trays of foods, don't just scarf up on everything." That's basically what he's saying. "Watch what you do. Those little hors d'oeuvres and all, they're not really to fill up on." And...

Be not desirous of the dainties: for they are deceitful meat (23:3).

Now I'll tell you, that is true. The hors d'oeuvres I've had, they are deceitful meat. They look good many times. But, I have a hard time with it, I, well?...

Labour not to be rich (23:4):

Don't let being rich be your goal in life. Jesus said, "Don't lay up for yourself treasures on earth, where moth and rust can corrupt and decay. Treasures that can be stolen by thieves. But rather, lay up for yourself treasures in heaven".

Paul in writing to Timothy, warning him about riches, declared, "They that will be rich fall into divers temptations which drown men's souls in perdition". Therefore the Bible exhorts us, "If riches increase, set not your hearts upon them". If God has blessed you, prospered you, great! But don't set your heart upon it. Don't labor to be rich. Jesus spoke of the difficulty of the man who trusts in riches, to enter into the kingdom of heaven. After the experience of the rich young ruler, came and fell at His feet, and said, "Good Master, what good thing must I do to inherit eternal life?", and he had this interchange with Jesus. When he heard the really command, or the requirements that Jesus set to him, he went away sorrowful, because he was very wealthy. Jesus said, "How hard it is for those who trust in riches, to enter the kingdom of heaven. It's easier for a camel to go through an eye of a needle, for than a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven".

The problem again with riches, as we were talking this morning, same as the problem with the flesh, you never can get enough. When can you say, "Well, I have enough". Look at all the striving that Donald Trump is going through trying to get more. Aren't you glad you don't have his problems? He's, he's late on interest payments of forty three million bucks. What would you do if you had interest payments of forty three million bucks, that were due a few weeks ago? I'm glad I don't have his problems. But when can a person say, "It's enough"? With riches, there is no place, there's always that desire for more. So, "Labor not to be rich,"...

and cease from your own wisdom. [That is your own conniving and all, to get rich.] Will you set your eyes upon that which is not (23:4-5)?

A fallacy that is quite common is that, riches are the cure to every problem. "If I was just rich, you know I wouldn't have any problems!" Wrong. Thus there is that hope of fulfillment, there is that hope of, of, and it's illusion. He said, "You're setting your eyes upon something which isn't".

for riches certainly take wings and they fly away as a eagle toward heaven (23:5).

You've heard the stories, I have too, of lost fortune. People who were millionaires, and are now digging ditches.

Do not eat the bread of him that hath an evil eye (23:6),

Now this is not the evil eye in the sense of, of some of the superstitious people who think that a person can give you some kind of a weird look, and put a hex on you. They, the Moslems, over in Israel, and I've seen some here, have these little hands that are sort of on a spring, on a suction cup they put in the back window of the car, and as the car is bumping down the road, the hand's going like this. The idea is to ward off the evil eye. Now, I've had some, I've looked in the rearview mirror, and seen some evil eyes, when I've done some dumb things in the car. But this is not a, a reference in, into an evil eye, as though someone can put a hex on you. I sometimes fighters have fellows in their corner that will look weird at the other boxer, trying to put an evil eye and a hex on him, and all. It's amazing what people do and believe. But this is an eye that is towards evil. There are other scriptures, Jesus said, "If thine eye be evil", and, and He warns about having an eye towards evil, or evil things. So, "Don't eat the bread of that person who has an eye towards evil"...

and neither desire his dainty meats: [So watch out for the ruler's deceitful meats, and his dainties, and watch out for the dainty meat from the man whose eye is towards evil.] *For as he thinks in his heart, so he is: and he will say to you eat and drink, but his heart is not with you (23:6-7).*

So, when I was a young pastor in Tucson, Arizona many years ago, there was a Sergeant in the Air Force that attended our church, and he invited us over for Sunday dinner. Sergeant Frye. He also invited a fellow that I had known from Santa Monica, who also was a Sergeant in the Air Force, he was Sergeant York, Glen York, not the one of fame, but he invited Glen, and Kay, and I over for lunch, and they had pot roast. I remember it very clearly. So it was very good, and we ate it, and so he said, "Have seconds! Come on, eat seconds!". So it was good, and so I went ahead and took seconds, as did Glen, my buddy. Then afterwards he said, "Usually a roast like this will last us all week, but it's sure this one's not!", you know. Yeah. Solomon is talking about the kind of a guy like that. "Eat, man eat!", but he says, "His heart isn't with you. Be careful.", you know.

And [he said] the morsel that you have eaten you'll vomit up, [And, and really I would like to have, you know, given him back the meat.] *If you speak in the ears of a fool: he will despise the wisdom of your words (23:8-9).*

So you're just wasting your words. You have a guy that is a fool, if you, if you try and reason with him, try to rationalize with him, you're just wasting your time. So it's just sort of an exhortation, you know, "Don't waste your time trying to instruct a fool". Now again...

Remove not the old landmarks; [We've had this several times. They were highly respected. In fact, this actually is, is under the law. It goes back to Deuteronomy. They, they had certain laws that they would chant, and the people would say, "Amen! Amen!", and one of the laws that they would sort of chant was the law of, "Remove not the landmark!", and the people would respond, "Amen! Amen!". The landmarks were the little piles of stone. We explained that to you, that sets the boundaries for the fields. So they were, they were held sort of sacred. "This is the family's grounds. Don't try to cheat, moving the pile over a little farther, giving yourself a little more acreage."

and enter not into the fields of the fatherless: [Don't take advantage of those that have no defense.] *For [They do have a defense] their redeemer is mighty;* [God watches over the fatherless, God watches over the poor.] *and he will plead their cause with you (23:10-11).*

You're going to be contending with God if you try to take advantage of the fatherless or the poor. The bible says, "Woe is he who strives with his maker".

Apply your heart to instruction, and your ears to the words of knowledge (23:12).

I can hear a dad saying that to a son. "Now son, apply your heart to instruction. Give heed to words of knowledge."

Now again, Solomon is giving advice concerning correcting your children, that I don't suggest that you follow in this day and age.

Withhold not correction from your child: if you beat him with the rod, he will not die. So you shall beat him with the rod, and deliver his soul from hell (23:13-14).

If you beat him with a rod, you may deliver his soul from hell, but you'll end in jail. The, and it's sad,

it's very sad that it is true that there is child abuse, and it's a terrible, horrible thing. Because of that, they've had to make restrictive laws, but again, it's, they overstep their bounds, and they take away, in a sense, the parent's rights to their own children. In the disciplining of their own children, in many cases.

So the Bible tells us to be in subjection to those that are ruling over us. That we are to obey the laws, and because of the laws that they do have, I say, I don't suggest that you follow Solomon's exhortation. Though what he's basically saying, "You can beat the hell out of your kids", but, you better not. "Beat him with the rod, you'll deliver his soul from hell." So, that's basically what he's saying.

My son, if your heart be wise, then my heart will rejoice. [How a father rejoices in the wisdom of his son!] *Yea, [he said] my innermost being will rejoice, when your lips speak right things (23:15-16).*

Proud dad, when his son speaks wise things! Then, the scriptures that we considered this morning.

Let not your heart envy sinners (23:17):

In the next chapter, first verse we read, "Don't be envious against evil men", and then verse nineteen of chapter twenty four, "Neither be envious of the wicked". So you're not to envy sinners. As we pointed out this morning, sometimes a person envies the riches of the sinner. As in Psalm seventy three, when Asaph said that, "His foot almost slipped", he had almost been wiped out, "when he saw the prosperity of the wicked, he became envious of them". Seeing their prosperity, he began to envy, the fact that they had so much. "They seemed to have", he said, "more than their hearts could wish. People are just giving them more, and yet here I am pressured by my bills, and can't pay my rent", and so he was envious of the wicked when he saw their prosperity.

Envious, until God allowed him to see the end, the end of the wicked. "Surely thou hast set them in slippery places, as in a moment, they'll go down into destruction. They'll be wholly consumed with terror." Then he realized how blessed he really was to have God, as his guide, as his friend, to receive him into glory at the end of the road. So, "Don't be envious of the sinner"...

but instead [contrast] be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long (23:17).

Walk in the fear of the Lord. The fear of the Lord is to hate evil, the fear of the Lord is that fear that comes from standing in awe of the presence of the creator of the universe. I go down to the beach, and I watch the surf on a stormy day, and I just stand there in awe of God's creation. I love it. That's what the fear of the Lord is. It's actually the reverence, the awe of God as we become aware of His wisdom, His power, His love. "Don't be envious of the sinners", he said.

For surely there is an end; and thine expectation shall not be cut off (23:18).

Walk in the fear of the Lord, considering the end, looking towards the end. That's always the key! As I walk down the path of life, the path that I have chosen, where will it lead me? Look down the path, where are you going? When you get to the end, and there is an end, what is at the end of that path? If you walk the path of iniquity, unrighteousness, the path of sin, the path of the flesh, the end of it is destruction. But if you walk the path of righteousness, daily walking in the fear of the Lord, the end of the path is eternal life with Jesus. So there is an end. He says, "Realize that!". You're gonna get to the end of the road one day, so it's important that you're on the right path.

Hear, my son, [Again, father to son.] hear this and be wise, and guide your heart in the right way. Don't associate with winebibbers; and among [gluttonous people] riotous eaters of flesh: For the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty: and drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags (23:19-21).

Don't get caught up in that crowd, drunkards, gluttons. Jesus warns us concerning the days before His return, the last days, that we should be careful that we not be caught unaware, by surprise. As the result, He said, of surfeiting, which is gluttony, and of drinking, so that, that day would catch you by surprise. The exhortation of Jesus there in Luke, and warning against the same two things, gluttony, and drinking. That can sort of cloud your judgment. Solomon said, "It'll bring you to poverty son".

Hearken to your father that begat thee, and don't despise your mother when she is old. Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding (23:22-23).

That's the valuable thing in life. That's what you want to really buy. Gain the truth, gain wisdom, gain knowledge, gain understanding. Over in Job, chapter twenty eight, we find that Job is answering his friends, and he's talking about the value of wisdom, where it might be found. He said, "Surely there is a vein for

silver, and a place for gold, where they find it. Iron is taken out of the earth, and copper is molten out of the stone”, or melted out of the stone, “he sets an end to the darkness, and he searches out all perfection. The stones of darkness, the shadow of death”.

Then going on down, he said, “But where”, verse twelve, “shall wisdom be found? Where is the place of understanding? Man knows not the price of it. Neither is it found in the land of the living, the depths saith, It is not in me; the sea saith, It is not with me. It cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof. It cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, or with the precious onyx, or the sapphire. The gold and the crystal cannot equal it, and the exchange of it shall not be for jewels or fine gold. No mention shall be made of coral, or of pearls, for the price of wisdom is above rubies”. So, “Buy the truth, sell it not; also wisdom, instruction, and understanding”.

The father of the righteous shall greatly rejoice: and he that begetteth a wise child shall have the joy of him (23:24).

So the father who has a son whose walking in righteousness. What a joy that is! What a blessing, to have a son that walks in righteousness, and is wise. John writing in his epistle said, “I have no greater joy than to know that my children walk in truth”. I think that most parents can say that. “I have no greater joy than to know that my children walk in truth.”

My son, give me your heart, and let your eyes observe my ways. [He’s warning now concerning...] The whore the deep ditch; the strange woman is a narrow pit (23:27).

“Son listen to me, give me your heart. Give me the attention of your heart. Let your eyes observe my ways. Know this.”

For she lies in wait as for a prey, and she increases the transgressors among men (23:28).

Now we have a little discourse upon wine. We already read, “Wine is a mocker, and strong drink is raging, and he who is deceived thereby is not wise”. Now he speaks more concerning this subject of wine. He said...

Who has woe? who has sorrow? who has contentions? [Or fightings] who has babblings? who has wounds and he doesn’t know how? who has redness of eyes? They that tarry long at wine; and they that go to seek mixed wine. Look not upon the wine when it is red, or when it gives his color in the cup, or when it moves itself aright (23:29-31).

That is, after the fermentation has taken place, when it begins to move of itself, in the cup. The fermenting process. In other words, after it’s been fermented, don’t, don’t look upon it. They called the juice wine. But here’s the warning about once it has been fermented, and it takes on it’s alcoholic content.

For at the [light, for at the] last it bites like a serpent, and it will sting like an adder. Your eyes [start drinking] will behold strange women, your heart will utter perverse things. You will be like a man who tries to lie down in the middle of the sea, or as one who tries to lie upon the top of a mast. [You’ll do stupid strange, weird things, when you’re drunk.] They have stricken me, you will say, and I was not sick; they’ve beaten me, and I didn’t feel it: when shall I awake? Then you will just seek it yet again (23:32-35).

The tragedy of the alcoholic. The man who has been captured by alcohol, the problems, problems.

Chapter 24

Don’t be envious against the evil men, neither desire to be with them. [A man is known by the company he keeps.] For the evil men, their hearts study destruction, and their lips speak of mischief. It is through wisdom that a house is built; and by understanding it is established (23:1-3):

Now this is really an exhortation for you mothers. “It is by wisdom that your house is built, it is by understanding that it becomes established.”

By knowledge shall the chambers be filled with all precious and pleasant riches (23:4).

The home, the mother, the homemaker. There was a lot of pressure put upon women, and I guess it hasn’t ceased entirely, to try to find your own identity in a career. To be a career woman. Motherhood was sort of put down as something for the ignorant and the poor. Something that was rather unsatisfying and unfulfilling. So many women in the 40’s today, who grew up in that time, where there was that sociological

pressure, who opted for the career, rather than for the joys and the blessing of motherhood. So many of them who gained success in their careers became the president of corporations and all, are now trying to have children, and have families. Because they realize that there is an emptiness in success, in being the corporation president, or whatever.

But there is tremendous fulfillment in a family with children. "Children are a heritage of the Lord, and blessed is the man whose quiver is full." I thank God for the joy, and the blessing, and the fulfillment that we receive through our children, and the absolute total ecstasy from our grandchildren. Ha, ha! It's worth having children, just to get the grandchildren. I feel sorry for those women who have to work, who miss out on all those wonderful, exciting things that little children do. I feel very sorry for those that don't have that joy of, of being able to give all of the constant input to that child. I find it so fulfilling, so enriching.

So, you have a full time career, but you have a fulfilling career when you pour your life into your child. You'll have times when they, when they get big, now these that are having kids when their forty, then by the time, they won't, they won't be able to see grandchildren. You see they miss out on the premiums. By the time they have grandkids, they'll be so old and crotchety, they, they won't be able to enjoy them, if they're still here.

So have your kids while you're young, and the joy never ceases, never ceases. "Through wisdom a house is built." I mean theirs is the most challenging career in all the world, is raising kids, I'm sure! It takes wisdom, it takes understanding, takes knowledge.

A wise man is strong; yea, a man of knowledge increases strength. For by wise counsel you will make war: and in a multitude of counsellors there is safety. Wisdom is too high for the fool: he opens not his mouth in the gate (24:5-7).

The gate was a place of judgment, the place where issues were decided, but the fool, wisdom's too high for him. He doesn't open his mouth there in the gate.

He that deviseth to do evil shall be called a mischievous person. [Then he tells us that...] The thought of foolishness is sin: the scorner is an abomination to men (24:8-9).

When I was in college, too bad I didn't read these verses. I think of all the devices and foolishness that we did, when we should've been studying.

Now if you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small (24:10).

Jeremiah said, "If you have run with the footmen, and you've become weary, what are you gonna do when you have to contend with horses?" You think it's tough now? What are you gonna do when it really gets tough. "If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small." God doesn't promise us that we won't have adversity. God doesn't promise us that we're not going to have problems. "They that live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." Now, if your strength is in and of yourself, if you're always looking within yourself for that source of strength, that sort of secret inner strength, you're gonna come to a place and a day in which you're gonna fall. Because you're gonna find that your strength isn't sufficient.

It's tragic when a person learns to rely upon their own wit, and their own strength, because one day, you're gonna be facing a situation where your wits aren't gonna get you out of it, and your strength won't be sufficient. But if you're trusting in the Lord, and it's in His strength, then you'll never get to the place where you can't handle it. You won't have the strength to do it. Because it's not your strength, you're looking to the Lord for His strength, and God won't let you down.

If you forbear to deliver those who are drawn to death (24:11),

If, if, there's a scripture that said that, "If you have the power in you to do good, and you do it not, it's sin". Not to help someone when you have the capacity to help them. Here he's saying much the same. "If you fail to help someone who is close to death",

those that are ready to be slain (24:11);

If you say, Oh I didn't know it, when you're faced with, Why didn't you help?, Oh I didn't know!, the one who ponders the hearts, will he not consider it? [God knows the truth, God knows your heart.] And he that keeps thy soul, does not he know it? And shall not he render every man according to his works (24:12)?

Heavy duty! God knows your heart. God knows what's going on inside. "God is going to render to every man according to his works."

My son, [he said] eat honey, because it's good; and the honeycomb, which is sweet to the taste: Now so shall the knowledge of wisdom be to thy soul: ["When you eat honey, and it's sweet, enjoy it, sweet to the taste, it's pleasant, so should knowledge be to you."] and wisdom when you have found it, then there shall be a reward, and your expectation shall not be cut off (24:13-14).

"Buy the truth, sell it not." I think that it's important that we have a love for the truth. I have discovered that as I read the Bible, and the Holy Spirit bears witness to my heart, the truth, a scripture suddenly just is illuminated in my mind. The Holy Spirit just brings to life, and enlightens me in the understanding that's there. It's to me, sweet like honey. I love it! I savor it! I just sort of kick back and say, "Alright! That's good!", just enjoy it! So, Solomon's saying, "Truth should be to you, understanding or wisdom, should be like that to you". Search it out, seek it out. Seek to know the Lord, seek to know the Lord's ways. Seek to have understanding in His ways. As the Lord begins to work in your heart, and reveals the truth to you, it's something that is just so pleasant, savory, something that you can truly enjoy.

Lay not wait, O wicked man, against the dwelling of the righteous; and spoil not his resting place: [So just warning against the wicked, who would seek to destroy the righteous.] For a just man falls seven times, but he rises again (24:15-16):

As I've said, the, the, the falling really isn't so bad, all of us have fallen, all of us do fall. That's not so bad. It's lying there that's bad. Not getting up. So when you fall, don't just lie there, get up! The just man will rise seven times! So, Satan though would say, "Hey man, give up. There's no sense trying! Look how you failed!", and he tries to discourage you, and make you just lie there. "I'm just such a failure. I never can do it. I just won't be able to live a righteous life. I just can't...", and he'll have you lie there and wallow in that pig sty. But get up! Don't lie there. "The just man falls seven times, but he rises again."

but the wicked, they will fall into mischief. [Really not rise.] Now don't rejoice when your enemy falls, and let not your heart be glad when he stumbles (24:16-17):

This is awfully hard. There's something perverse within all of us isn't there? When our enemy stumbles, or falls, say, "Ah, ha, ha! I knew it, I knew it, Alright!", you know. The reason why Solomon gives this advice is interesting. I mean, I find it very interesting why he said this. He said...

Lest the Lord sees it, and it displeases him, and he turns away his wrath from him (24:18).

In other words, if you want the guy to keep getting it, just, don't rejoice in it you see. Just, "Oh, oh! It's too bad!", you know, but don't rejoice too much in it. The Lord might feel sorry for him and take the heat off! I find that interesting! That's his reasoning for it! Interesting.

Fret not thyself because of evil men, neither be thou envious at the wicked (24:19):

He no doubt heard this from his dad, because if you go back to Psalm, thirty seven, it begins with this verse. So this is something that he got from his dad David, and now he's passing it on to his son. "Don't fret because of evil men", and yet, how prone we are to fret because, I fret, because of evil men. I get so upset over evil men, I get so upset over things like what went on in San Francisco yesterday, and what went on in West Hollywood today. I, I fret because of evil doers, I really do. Says not to, but I do. "Neither be envious at the wicked." That, I'm not. I know their end! Poor people!

For there shall be no reward to the evil man; [That's why you shouldn't be envious of him. I mean, man! The end of the evil man is...] the candle of the wicked will be put out. [So don't be envious of him!] My son, fear the Lord and the king: and meddle not with those that are given to change (24:20-21):

A lot of times we can meddle with things that can get us into trouble. "Don't meddle with those that are given", those who are vacillating, those who haven't really a strong position, but are vacillating back and forth.

For their calamity shall rise suddenly; and who knows the ruin of them both? Now these things also belong to the wise. It is not good to have respect of persons in judgment. And he that saith to the wicked, You are righteous; him shall the people curse, and the nations shall abhor him (24:22-24):

Now when a person of great prominence or great riches has done something that is wrong, you're not to have respect of the persons if you are there in judgment, and you're to give judgment on the case. You're not to respect them because they're so wealthy, they have so much. You say, "Oh well that's alright", to their wicked deeds, you just sort of pass it off, you excuse it, because the people will hate you. They'll curse you.

“The nations will abhor you.” But if you have no respect for that person, but are judging righteously...

Those that rebuke him shall be a delight, and a good blessing shall come upon them. Every man will kiss his lips that gives the right answer. Now prepare thy work without, and make it fit for thyself in the field; and then afterwards build your house (24:25-27).

It's just a good instruction. Get the land all filled, and taken care of, and then build your house.

Don't be a witness against your neighbor without cause; and deceive not with your lips. Don't say, I'll do to him like he did to me: [Ever said that, "I'll get even with him!", for God said...] I will render to every man according to his work (24:28-29).

“Vengeance is mine saith the Lord, I will repay.” Don't you know, return evil for evil, but commit those things to God. Let God take care of it. I have found that if I seek to defend myself, God will let me. But I have a poor defense. I have found that if I commit the things to the Lord, “Lord, you take care of it”, and there are a lot of times you, you want to, you want to get in, and, and, “That's a lie! That's not true!”, and you want to defend yourself. “I'll tell them! I'll write them a letter! I'll do this, I'll do that!”. Well, go ahead and defend yourself, the Lord will let you. But if you just commit it to the Lord, He'll be your defense, He'll take care of it. So, I have learned. Don't say, “I'll do to him, like he did to me”.

Now he closes off this chapter with a little thing on the lazy man. Last chapter he closed off on the drinking man, now on the lazy man.

I went by the field of a lazy man, the vineyard of a man who was void of understanding: Lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the ground, and the stone wall was broken down. [Lazy! Didn't bother to weed it, didn't bother to keep the stone wall in repair.] And then I saw, and I considered it: [Saw that deplorable condition, and just considered it well.] I looked upon it, and I was instructed by it. [“I learned something from it.”] Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: And so shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth; and thy want as an armed man (24:30-34).

Laziness. The Bible encourages us towards diligence, towards work, against slothfulness, or laziness. Just good wisdom, practical instruction. It's worth more than rubies. “Buy the truth, sell it not.”

Father, we thank You again this evening for the opportunity of being instructed, in the way of truth and righteousness. Grant to us Lord, wisdom, knowledge, understanding. The wisdom of Your ways, the knowledge of Your grace, the understanding of Your love. In Jesus' name, Amen.